



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
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For More Information, Contact:  
Janna Pastir or Amy Schwartz  
North Dakota Department of Health  
Division of Disease Control  
Phone: 701.328.2378 or 800.472.2180  
E-mail: [jlpastir@nd.gov](mailto:jlpastir@nd.gov) or  
[amschwartz@nd.gov](mailto:amschwartz@nd.gov)

### **Parents Reminded of the Importance of Keeping their Children Up to Date on Vaccinations during National Infant Immunization Week**

BISMARCK, N.D. – During National Infant Immunization Week, April 20-27, 2013, the North Dakota Department of Health would like to remind parents of the importance of protecting infants from vaccine-preventable diseases.

National Infant Immunization Week is an annual observance that emphasizes the need to fully immunize children 24 months and younger against 14 vaccine-preventable diseases. Following the recommended immunization schedule not only protects the infant, but also everyone in their community by preventing and reducing the spread of infectious diseases.

“The recommended immunization schedule is designed to offer protection early in life,” said State Health Officer Dr. Terry Dwelle. “This is important because it protects babies when they are vulnerable and before it’s likely they will be exposed to diseases.”

Public health and medical experts base their vaccine recommendations on many factors. They study information about diseases and vaccines very carefully to decide which vaccines kids should get and when they should get them for best protection.

Although the number of vaccines a child needs in the first two years may seem like a lot, doctors know a great deal about the human immune system, and they know that a healthy baby’s immune system can handle getting all vaccines when they are recommended.

“There is no known benefit to delaying vaccination. In fact, it puts babies at risk of getting sick because they are left vulnerable to catch serious diseases during the time they are not protected by vaccines,” said Dr. Dwelle. “When parents choose not to vaccinate or to follow a delayed schedule, children are left unprotected against diseases that still circulate in this country, like measles and whooping cough.”

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600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200  
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: [health@nd.gov](mailto:health@nd.gov)

Visit the health department home page at [www.ndhealth.gov](http://www.ndhealth.gov).

In 2010, more than 27,000 cases of pertussis (whooping cough) were reported nationally with 27 deaths – 25 of which were infants. Last year in North Dakota there were 215 cases of pertussis, which is three times as many cases as in 2011. Of these cases, 39 were in children younger than two and eight of these cases were hospitalized.

“Vaccines have been so successful at preventing disease that many people may not have heard of some of today’s vaccines or the diseases they are designed to prevent even though they are still prevalent in other parts of the world,” said Janna Pastir with the Immunization Program in the Department of Health. “These diseases still exist and can be especially serious for infants and younger children.”

For more information about National Infant Immunization Week, contact Janna Pastir or Amy Schwartz, North Dakota Department of Health, at 1.800.472.2180, or visit our website at [www.ndhealth.gov/immunize](http://www.ndhealth.gov/immunize).

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